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THE POLISH REFERENDUM

By Ann Su Cardwell

On June 30, the Polish Provisional Government held a nation-wide referendum ostensibly submitting three questions to the electorate. Those questions were:

(1) Do you approve the abolition of the Senate?
(2) Do you approve agrarian reform and nationalization of industry?
(3) Do you agree that Poland's western boundary should follow the Oder and Neisse Rivers?

It is significant that this so-called referendum, denounced as "fraudulent" by Deputy Premier Mikolajczyk, was also unconstitutional. The present Polish regime pretends to accept the Constitution of 1921 as its basic law. This Constitution does not recognize the institution of the referendum. All three questions should have been submitted to Parliament, where, as constitutional amendments, they would have required a two-thirds majority.

It is on grounds of gross irregularities in voting and counting the ballots, however, that Mikolajczyk asks that the whole proceeding be nullified.

The actual purposes of the referendum, as thought out in Moscow, have naturally not been advertised. It was meant to fool the West into believing that voting in Poland is "free and unfettered", this being a condition of American recognition of the present Government. It was meant to appear as a popular vote of confidence in the regime, thus indicating that the parliamentary election promised for the fall is a mere formality. The referendum was further designed to identify opposition to the Provisional Government and thus to help the difficult task of the dreaded NKVD -- the Russian secret police.

The referendum was not only of questionable legality, and "fraudulent". It was also a sham. Why were the Poles queried only about their western frontier? Why were they not asked if they were satisfied with that on the East? In view of Russia's annexations there, the electorate was not likely to reject "compensation" offered at the expense of Germany. Even so, almost a million votes were admittedly cast against this expansion.

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An affirmative vote could also be expected on Question 2, since land reform has been favored by all Polish governments since 1919. Question 1, however, would have received a strongly negative vote had there been freedom from fear in balloting. As the French recently demonstrated, the Communist plan of capturing control -- by eliminating the checks provided by a Second Chamber -- is too transparent a design. Apparently, there was a two to one majority for abolition of the Polish Senate. But Deputy Premier Mikolajczyk, whose Polish Peasant Party opposed this measure, asserts that an honest tabulation would have defeated the unicameral legislature proposal by an 85 to 15 ratio.

II

An opposition must be discovered before it can be exterminated. Although the secret police organizations have their own effective ways of working, the referendum of June 30 provided excellent opportunity for ascertaining the attitude of individual citizens toward the regime. Voting was not supposed to be compulsory; but trucks were sent out to gather up people, as in the elections under Soviet auspices in Eastern Poland in October, 1939. Soldiers and police armed with machine guns were on duty at the polls.

Though voting was supposed to be secret, each voter knew that his ballot might be checked. Blank ballots counted for the affirmative. The election boards, which according to the Constitution should consist of representatives of each party, except in a few instances had no Polish Peasant Party members. Contrary to law, the ballots were not counted on the spot in the presence of those boards. Furthermore, it was entirely possible for those concerned to stuff the boxes with blank ballots before the opening of the polling places. Fraud was so obvious that even the Government's Referendum Commissioner has been forced to admit some irregularities.

All this manipulation of the machinery and technique of voting and the handling of election boards must be regarded as a part of the process of destroying the opposition. The smashing victory of the Provisional Government, as announced last week, was foreordained, and was, indeed, the major objective of the referendum.

Mikolajczyk, with the net about him hourly tightening, chose to risk a showdown by standing in opposition on Question 1. As a matter of fact, the Polish Peasant Party never strongly favored retention of the Senate, but came to its defense as the only way in which opposition to the Government could be registered. It is, therefore, the more significant that on the issue of a unicameral legislature, some four million Poles were tabulated as voting "No".

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Under the Provisional Government, all old-established Polish political parties have been taken over by Communists posing as legitimate members of those parties. After Mikolajczyk's entrance into the puppet regime, and his discovery that he could not control the old Peasant Party, he organized the new Polish Peasant Party. Conditional American and British recognition has been accorded the Provisional Government largely because of inclusion in that government of Mikolajczyk, a former Premier of the wartime Government-in-Exile in London. Therefore, his new party was allowed to exist, despite its opposition attitude. Mikolajczyk has been much criticized for his co-operation with the puppet regime of Moscow. Nevertheless, members of all the non-Communist parties in Poland have turned to him as their one tie with the West and the only opposition leader allowed even limited activity.

This is the opposition the regime is determined to exterminate, calling it "fascist", "reactionary", "directed and financed from abroad" and linking Mikolajczyk with the "London Poles" and the British. Every form of terror and repression has been employed and mass arrests have been common. The instruments are the Security police, the civilian police, the "Polish" Army, the special reserve (ORMO) recruited for the referendum and the NKVD.

Heading the Ministry of Security is Radkiewicz, a Soviet citizen who has learned to speak Polish only recently. His power surpasses that of all other members of the regime. It is reported that he has 150,000 employes in his organization, the core of which consists of trained officers from the Polish section of the Soviet NKVD. The budget of his ministry alone for November-December, 1945, totaled the enormous sum of 261,000,000 zlotys; the Ministry of Food for the same period spent 37,000,000.

Another 30,000 persons constitute ORMO, the militia reserve; 60,000 are in the civilian police force. The size of the NKVD in Poland is difficult to ascertain, but it has been reported to consist of seven divisions. Estimates for the Red Army run from 400,000 to 1,000,000. And there are large numbers of Soviet soldiers in Polish uniform. "Foreigners", said a Pole recently arrived in the United States, "do not know that they are Russian. But Poles know."

Among the 60 highest-ranking officers in General Rola-Zymierski's so-called Polish Army, 40 are Red Army men in Polish uniform. The entire "Polish" aviation, signal corps and tank force -- both officers and men -- are Russians. After the visit to Moscow in May of this year of President Bierut, Premier Osubka-Morawski and various other Minis-

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ters, including Vice-Premier Gomulka but not his colleague in office Mikolajczyk, a loan from the USSR to Poland was announced. That loan, it appears, is to consist of army equipment and funds for training officers by the Red Army. Thus the "Polish" Army in fact becomes a part of the Red Army, since its commanding officers, its equipment and training will be Soviet.

IV

Resistance to the Soviet-dominated regime in Poland is continuous and increasing. Reports abound of attempts, successful and unsuccessful, at resistance to government orders; of "armed bands" seizing and holding villages and small towns until forced out by Red Army troops; of the forceful release of many hundreds of political prisoners at Zamosc, Krakow and other places. On July 9, the New York Times correspondent in Warsaw reported that: ". . . among many Poles of all shades of opinion there is the gravest concern over the possibility of civil war promotion by Left or Right Wing elements . . ."

But indescribable war destruction and plundering have left the people poverty-stricken, disease-ridden, famine-threatened. They have neither equipment nor funds for clearing away ruins or rebuilding; consequently, unemployment is great. The bulk of production -- rural, factory or mine -- goes to the USSR. Only the employed get ration cards and rationed food is insufficient to supply card holders. The "free" (Black) market has everything -- at astronomical prices. Wages and salaries are so low that they are almost meaningless unless supplemented by grants of food and clothing. The situation is not one in which the Resistance Movement can easily be more than sporadic.

Such active and able leaders as survived the war are rapidly disappearing. Sovietization of all Polish life has been in process ever since the Red Army's entry into Poland. Yet the Polish people accept the regime imposed upon them for what its name in Polish says it is -- the Polish Temporary Government. Since that regime owes its authority to American and British recognition, a heavy responsibility to understand its nature rests on the people of the Western Democracies.

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Ann Su Cardwell, well known as a writer on Polish subjects, lived in Poland from 1922 to 1939 and maintains a close liaison with that country.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. III, NO. 29

By Frank C. Hanighen July 17, 1946

The struggle over OPA, that corpse lying between the grave and possible legislative resurrection, has entered a phase of such technical complexity that few even on Capitol Hill can entirely understand it. De-controls, the Taft amendment, the Wherry amendment, "mark-up as of June 1941", and other involved points of argument have driven consumers to the dubious pleasure of conversation about a more understandable matter -- what the dollar will buy.

But even here nothing is simple, despite the political tub-thumping of organizations -- of a less than demure pink complexion -- which try to promote "buyers' strikes". The cost of living has advanced about 11 per cent in recent weeks, according to Dun and Bradstreet, as a result of the rise of commodity food prices. But those who buy 80 cent butter today may recall that they could not buy any butter at all a few weeks ago. And there are prices and prices. Sirloin steak was tabbed at 45 cents a pound by OPA; today it sells for about 65 to 75 cents; but the black market charged $1.25. Wheat has zoomed from the OPA price of $1.77 a bushel to $2 under the free market. But it was selling in the black market for $2.25.

Comparisons like these, however, do not soothe the housewife's feelings, which are likely to remain in ferment for some time. Economists may talk coolly of a "difficult period of readjustment". But Members of Congress fear that voters will not prove that detached; and they worry about the pitfalls of our complicated economy. Last week saw some good old trading of votes by producer blocs. Thus, northern Senators from "milk" states agreed to vote for de-control of cottonseed oil, in exchange for promises by southern Senators to vote for de-control of dairy products. But then fell the shadow of a doubt. If meat is de-controlled, but the ceiling on wheat is kept, won't the farmers in the West find it more profitable to feed wheat to cattle than to send it to the starving of Europe?

Economic logic points inexorably toward the necessity of de-controlling all products. Yet the popular mood remains so uncertain that timid legislators hesitate to enter what seems today, after years of controls, an almost forgotten country -- a free economy.

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Secretary of State Byrnes presented the best of his official countenances to the public in a brave and able little speech on July 15, outlining his view of the results of the last three months in Paris. The tone was modestly hopeful. But the tenor of private comments by other officials is less so. They think that Byrnes and Bevin were "worn down" by the "Hammer's" relentless diplomatic pounding, and that they gave way on crucial points. This official opinion is doubtful about the soundness of Byrnes' optimism concerning the coming conference. Russia won sufficient concessions on procedure to provide plenty of opportunities for wrangling and procrastination -- while the work of consolidating Eastern and Central Europe under its rule goes on.

It is worthy of note that Mr. Bevin, by contrast, returns in an openly gloomy mood to England. All he would say, according to the New York Times, was that the making of a just and lasting peace "is proving a very difficult task"; and as for the coming Peace Conference in Paris, the Times reports that in London, "speculation inclines toward pessimism".

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The Chinese Government has discovered a Soviet Russian conspiracy to counterfeit and circulate American currency in the Far East. Chinese Treasury authorities recently discovered a considerable number of spurious American $50 bills and traced some of them to a Soviet Russian ship in Shanghai harbor. At the same time, American

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military commanders in Korea, in a raid on Korean Communist headquarters, found materials and apparatus for counterfeiting Korean currency. Experts have little doubt that Russia, via her various tentacles abroad, has been engaged in a counterfeiting offensive in the Far East. Not only the Chinese, but also the American Treasury has been alerted and U. S. Treasury agents have gone to China to investigate.

American official quarters express no surprise at this Russian action. They point out that once before Soviet Russia tried to pass large amounts of forged American Treasury notes. General W. G. Krivitsky, the renegade Soviet Russian Intelligence officer, in his book In Stalin's Secret Service (New York, 1939), describes that affair. According to Krivitsky, Stalin in 1930 personally ordered the counterfeiting plot in order to obtain foreign exchange for industrialization purposes and to supply funds for the Soviet secret service abroad. Soviet agents bought up an old and respected Berlin bank as a channel to pass these notes. The forgeries were discovered when the bank sent some of these notes to the Federal Reserve Bank in New York for collection. Later a Soviet agent was arrested as he sought to pass some of the forged notes in the United States, in collaboration with American gangsters. He was tried and sentenced to prison. Krivitsky says that while no little effort was expended on this scheme in Europe and the United States, the real objective was to obtain much needed funds in China. The plot failed because the methods of forgery detection and the whole system of modern banking rendered any large-scale passing of falsified notes futile.

The objective of the forgeries today is obviously to undermine the value of the American dollar in China and thereby to intensify the already disastrous inflation in that area. The lesson of the affair reinforces awakening realization of the methods of Soviet Russia. Krivitsky said of the 1930 conspiracy, "The fact is interesting, not only intrinsically, but because it reveals the primitiveness of this Georgian's mind -- his ignorance of modern world conditions, and the readiness with which in a crisis he turns to the expedients of common crime." Today, Stalin again betrays his ignorance of how the capitalistic system works and again shows how wide is the gulf that separates "two worlds".

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With headlines of "Mead vs. May", the current muckraking on Capitol Hill has given a vigorous stir to the political pot in New York State. Mead, surrounded by the aura of "Prosecutor" might be in a better position to oppose another "Prosecutor", Governor Dewey, in the Governorship election in New York this fall. Indeed, some quarters believe that Dewey had knowledge of the present scandal and was prepared to bring it out during his campaign; Mead, knowing this, moved to forestall him. If this is so, it may excuse him with the Democratic politicos. They do not like to see Democrat fighting Democrat, and they fear extension of the probe of wartime corruption.

Among these professional politicians, James A. Farley has considerable influence and it is becoming increasingly evident that Farley is opposed to Mead. It is reported that the former Democratic Boss will soon take a long trip to South America and will not return until after the New York State Democratic Convention. By his absence from that meeting, he will not be pledged to support Mead. Farley, it is recalled, was a delegate to the National Conventions in 1940 and 1944 and therefore felt himself bound to support Roosevelt, whom he secretly opposed. Whether he will cause important Democratic defections in the coming election remains to be seen. At any rate, he is privately predicting a Republican victory in New York, according to his intimates; and so are other old-line Democrats.

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The death of Sidney Hillman has given Republicans more confidence. Hillman was the linchpin which held together the various Leftist and Labor factions of the Democratic Party, and today no one appears as a capable successor. But political experts, while conceding that the Hillman loss will be keenly felt by 1948, do not foresee any widespread crumbling of the Democratic Left this fall, at least in New York. If it holds together, the Hillman bloc of American Labor Party and Liberal Party can muster about 700,000 votes, a formidable obstacle to the Republicans.

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Molotov last week not only gave the coup de grâce to the Morgenthau plan by his advocacy of a unified, industrialized Germany, but also jerked up the curtain on what has consistently been the Russian's long-range aim in Germany. Even the Russophile New York Herald Tribune admitted that Molotov "foreshadowed a Communist or at least totalitarian Germany . . . working in the Soviet interest". The preparations for the accomplishment of this objective had proceeded far enough to set the stage for the Russian Foreign Secretary's forthright and epochal statement of policy.

On April 5, 1945, this column printed a forecast (by an informed European source) of the course of events in Germany after V-E Day. At the time, critical readers dismissed this analysis as "German propaganda to divide the Allies". Unfortunately, the predictions have been mostly confirmed by subsequent events as may be seen from the following quotations from that story. "In the Eastern (Russian) zone, housing conditions will be better. . . . Also, food will be plentiful because the Eastern zone contains the best agricultural areas. . . .

"In the Western zones, on the other hand, food production will fall far short of meeting the people's needs. . . . The Western Allies will be unable, because of world bottlenecks, to send food into Germany. The resultant conditions will be truly formidable. . . .

". . . such organization [of the Western zones] will suffer from the fact that they have no constructive policy. The Morgenthau plan will aggravate the situation. . . .

"While the Anglo-Americans will be 'tough', the Russians will seek to conciliate the Germans to bring them under Russian domination."

All this has come true. And, in view of recent developments in Germany, the rest of the prophecy cannot safely be ruled out of consideration: "The Germans will lose their fear of the Russians, will come to hate the Anglo-Americans and will clamor for incorporation into the Eastern zone. . . . Russia will win the battle of peace in Germany."

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The developing expansion of Argentine policy is currently noted in Chile. According to advices from Santiago, many Chileans are saying quite openly that the new President (to succeed the recently deceased Juan Antonio Rios) will be "hand-picked" by Buenos Aires. If Spruille Braden can play favorites in Argentina, why shouldn't Perón do the same -- more intelligently -- in Chile? Even the most cautious observers now admit that Perón is showing great interest in the Chilean political picture and will throw his influence behind one of the candidates. As a matter of fact, the Argentine example has already left its mark: many Chileans believe that after a period of democratic political confusion they need a "strong man" -- presumably like Perón -- to lift their country out of the present economic slump and to restore order. One such potential caudillo, Arturo Alessandri Palma, is a prominent candidate for the Presidency. He is a former Radical, now violently anti-Communist and a strong conservative in his economic views. Significantly he has a reputation for being anti-U.S.A.; and he opposed Chile's entrance into the war against the Axis.

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Notes and Quotes

One World Department. General Clay, American commander in Germany, was quoted in the New York Times (July 11), as follows: ". . . Our objectives in Germany cannot be accomplished unless we carry out faithfully and to the full the disarmament, denazification and deindustrialization measures which Allied statesmen have found necessary to the world." [Italics ours.]

On the same day and on the same page of the Times is a statement from the lips of Mr. Molotov: "I proceed from the fact that in the light of the interests of world economy and tranquillity in Europe, it would be incorrect to adopt a course of Germany's annihilation as a state or that of its agrarianization, including the annihilation of its own main industrial centers." [Italics ours.]

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In Japan, as well as in Germany (see NMG, June 26, 1946), our occupation authorities billet our forces with a magnificent disregard of the social results. We quote a letter from a GI in Tokyo: "This taking over of private Japanese homes is getting pretty severe. Anything approximating a foreign-style house in the Tokyo area has long since been listed for expropriation, and now they are down to the point where they are even taking Japanese-style houses provided they can be transformed for winter use. I have visions of some of these houses collapsing like houses of cards when heavy Western-style furniture is put into them. A piano, I am sure, would go right through the floor. But the worst part of the whole business is that, by driving people out of their homes at a time like this, we are sowing a crop of ill-will that is bound to do harm."

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Charles Morgan, writing in the London Sunday Times (July 7) takes a bilious view of life under the Labor Government: "The table on which young men are required to lay out their stakes in life has no reasonable stability.

"Today it is safer to be a bureaucrat than a maker, and the young men know it. As the ceiling of opportunity comes down, they will be forced to stoop lower and lower over their official desks and to think of nothing but their subordination. Socialism, as now interpreted, is competition without prizes, boredom without hope, war without victory, and statistics without end. It takes the heart out of young men, and out of every woman who runs a home and not an office. It is not only politically false but morally destructive."

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Our attention has been called to a speech made by Commodore Perry before the American Geographical and Statistical Society in 1856, stating: ". . . it seems to me that the people of America will, in some form or other, extend their dominion and their power, until they shall have . . . placed the Saxon race upon the eastern shores of Asia. And I think too that eastward and southward will her great rival in future aggrandizement (Russia) stretch forth her power to the coasts of China and Siam: and thus the Saxon and the Cossack will meet. . . . Will it be in friendship? I fear not! The antagonistic exponents of freedom and absolutism must thus meet at last, and then will be fought the mighty battle on which the world will look with breathless interest; for on its issue will depend the freedom or the slavery of the world. . . . I think I see in the distance the giants that are growing up for that fierce and final encounter; in the progress of events that battle must sooner or later be fought."

The passage is reprinted on page 129 of Arthur Walworth's Black Ships Off Japan, "The Story of Commodore Perry's Expedition", recently published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

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